1: Whiting E-5 (1936-1937) 1941
OJ13 Kwoma OJ13

A man who has attained high prestige in the community and, in addition, has taken the head of an enemy, is asked to join *Nokwi*, the highest stage of the yam cult, and he thereby receives the greatest honor that a Kwoma man can attain. If he is able to achieve this mark of status, the final mystery of the *marsalai* is unfolded to him. He is told that the booming rhythm that he has always heard at the *Nokwi* ceremony is not the footsteps of the great female *marsalai* in whose honor the ceremony is held, but is a sound made by a huge water drum.[28] A man plants yams for the first time on the occasion of his initiation into *Nokwi* and learns from the cult members how to solicit the aid and coöperation of the *marsalai*, which are believed necessary for a successful yam crop.

The yam cult, in addition to being a mode of ranking men in accordance with their attainments and of providing a means of gaining the support of the *marsalai*, is the primary institution for artistic expression. It has been shown how the child secretly learns to play the gongs, to sing, and to dance, and how during adolescence he is formally taught these skills, first in the bush house and later at the house tamberan. During adulthood men vie with one another in demonstrating their accomplishments in these artistic techniques. A man who is superior in one or more of them gains high praise from the community; people speak of him as a *harafa ma malaka*. At the beginning of each ritual the participants examine the carved wooden figures on the altar and comment on their excellence, those who have made them standing by to receive the praise. Men who are adept at carving may expend considerable time and effort fashioning and painting the formalized wooden heads and figures which are supposed to represent the *marsalai* of the cult, in order to have them so displayed.

Men who show a talent for gong beating have the opportunity during the cult ceremonies to play the most sophisticated rhythms in the orchestra, and those who excel in com-

[28] The water drum is a hollowed log shaped like a canoe, truncated at both ends, suspended in water so that the lips are submerged, and beaten by a pole wielded by two men.

346 slightly larger at the top and about three-and-one-half feet high. It
gave the impression of the hull of a very high and stubby ship sailing
346 parallel to the long axis of the house. At each end were two large carved
532 wooden figures standing upright. These figures had shuttle-shaped bodies
of feather work with no representation of arms, legs or wings. The
feathers were slate blue and resembled those of the gouria pigeon; they
were arranged similarly to their natural state on the bird. The head of
each figure was a carved face about one and one-half feet high and nine
inches broad. Rather than full figure, the carving was more similar to
relief work. The cheeks were hollow rather than rounded and gave the
impression of a dish face. The nose was disproportionately long and pointed,
the mouth small and round. The entire face was painted in black, white, and
red. In addition to these two masks or statuettes, others were distributed
around the edge of the basket. Their size varied, but all of them were
smaller than the figures at each end of the basket. Some of them had
featherwork bodies, others no bodies, and one a wooden body roughly shaped
and representing a female. In addition, the whole altar was decorated with
red berries and yellow leaves attached here and there.

796 When we entered the building the "finish timers" crowded around us
123 and warned us that the "singsing" was a ceremony for adult men only and that
[562] we must not say anything about it to either the women or children. We
[858] were also warned not to mention it to the Patrol officer, or they might
[648] get in trouble. (The government has no policy of restricting such ceremonies
except when they are directly connected with head hunting). The main purpose
of the peroration seemed to be to impress us with the importance of the
[532] affair. We were then led up to the altar and shown each of the figures,

796
532 and told to whom they belonged. The two large ones belonged respectively
[123] to the "tultul" and the "luluai" (pidgin for the native government repre
sentative and the village head man). We exclaimed over them and told them
they were "number one".

796 While we were being shown the figures a dance was in progress around
535 the alter. About half of the natives there were shambling around it,
[533] sometimes stepping from side to side in time to the beating of the gongs
[534] and sometimes merely walking, depending on whether or not the spirit moved
them. Sometimes everyone would be dancing; at all times at least two
of them were. The step was a sort of springy goose step, the beat emphasized
with a pause by the down-treading on one foot with the other in the air.
The raised foot was sometimes brought across in front of the other one, and
sometimes behind. In either case, the toes were pointed outward, and the
raised foot scraped along the ground. Coincident with the stepping, the
[415] body was twisted from side to side, particularly the shoulders. Practically
[276] all of the men held their betel gourds under their left arms and were
constantly dipping the spatulas in and sucking on them. Occasionally one
of the dancers would pick up a mat bag (empty except for a withe inserted
around its edge to make it stiff and fanlike), hold it above his head
either in one or both hands, and twist it back and forth in harmony with
the contortions of his body. The dancers would drop in and out of the dance
at will, have a rest, smoke, take their turn at beating the gongs, and then
return.

796 For clothes, the older men wore nothing except arm and leg bands
291 (and not all of them wore these); necklaces of dogs' teeth; shell; hair
301 ornaments of feathers and combs; or a combination of these. Most of the
"finish timers" wore laplaps or shorts; one of them wore a laplap over his

796 usual costume of an old bathing suit. The faces of practically all of
291 them were smeared with black paint, particularly on their eyebrows, and in
301 lines on their forehead. On some a narrow line of black was drawn along
[302] the hairline, framing the face.

796 In time to the dancing and the beating of the gongs, a chant was sung.
533 One of the dancers would start a short verse sung in a high monotone. It was spoken very rapidly and I could not take it down very well. One verse sounded like yagwuligwuligwuligo. At the end of the verse everyone shouted in chorus wawa or awa, with a prolongation and accent on the first syllable. It was shouted on a lower note than the verse; the second syllable was even lower than the first. After two or three verses, there was a longer chorus which started with awa sung twice, followed by a sort of chant of wahowaho, dadohoha, or hahoiawa that was sung on a higher note than those with the vowel "a". After this longer chorus, they would lapse into silence for a moment, and the gongs would stop beating; but usually after only a few seconds, someone would start another song. After one person had started a verse, the others would join in. Some people were dancing almost constantly, more fervently than others; everyone, however, participated at some time.

796 There were six large gongs (logs) ranging from about eight feet long
534 and two feet in diameter, to half that size, lying around the sides of the house. The logs had been hollowed out in roughly the same manner as a canoe although the shell was much thicker, and usually only one end was pointed and carved. The slit on top was about six inches wide and about
[532] three quarters the length of the log. The carving was a rough representation of a crocodile. The beaters were round pieces of wood about a foot long

796 around a framework. At the front and back ends, tilting toward the center,
346 were two huge masks, about four feet long and a foot wide. They were
778 beautifully carved and painted in black, white , red, and green. At the
[532] top of each mask was fastened what looked like feather work, a semblance of
[237] hair. Capping this were plumes similar to those worn by the dancers themselves.
The mask near the front was called asambwaŋ́, and belonged to Waskuk (an old man of Waskuk actually owned it); the one at the rear was called abímakwa and belonged to Bangua (actually to the cicatrizer). The space between the masks on the top of the altar was covered with shell ornaments. A pumpkin seed shaped ornament of small cowrie shells fastened in rows on a woven or closely netted fabric was called sawímaŋ́. Another was similarly constructed, but shaped as a crocodile, with two larger shells for eyes, and called mo maski (mo means crocodile). Plumes, cockatoo, pigeon, etc, were set in various
[535] places in addition to bit of yellow grass hung in bunches. Some of the dancers also wore this same yellow grass stuck into their arm and leg bands.

796 The front of the house tamberan had been hidden from view by a 6½' screen.
346 While it prevented the women and children from seeing the sacred precincts,
417 the men could and did stand up on the framework of the screen to look out onto the other side. The women and children were not to come until the next day, but some of the men, at least one anyway, were on the women's side. We did not dare look over the screen for fear of breaking some taboo.

796 After a few minutes, we were escorted to some seats (planks that had been
533 hewn from 2' x 6' x 8" logs, and roughly carved), and told that the singsing
[123] would begin soon. Some of the natives began to walk slowly and silently around
[352] the altar while the "lulual" of Bangua, (one of the Kwoma hamlets) Sowinambi, began a verse in a high voice which ended in a prolonged o on the same note and fell off to a wí with shorter duration, on a lower note. This verse was answered from the other side of the screen in exactly the same manner, but with different words to the verse.

It turned out the next
787 morning that the wife of Har (Wof's adopted son and one of our houseboys) had become possessed by a spirit which was talking through her. The words she spoke were unintelligible this time, but often they can be understood.
[789] Such possession is used to detect thiefs. The voices heard were Wof exorcising this ghost. The general opinion was that the ghost was angry at him and so he remained in his house and shouted at the possessed woman in the next house to frighten the ghost away. He evidently was successful,
[115] for there were no dire effects. We got the account from the kids, so it
[614] is not very clear, but it gives us a lead. According to them only two or
[562] three persons in each sib can be possessed, and these are of either sex. What it means beyond this we don't know as yet.

114 December 3, 1936. It was a bright cool day today,; the temperature at dawn
[132] was 68 which is the lowest we have observed. This change buoyed up our
124 spirits considerably, and they were even more raised when Marok, who is probably the most respected of the older men of the tribe, and a person of striking dignity, came to pay us a visit. He had come around previously when we were working on kinship. We asked him who his father and mother,
[123] etc. were. He told us, but immediately asked us the same questions. When we told him, he repeated them over very interestedly, thus putting us all on an equal footing.

614 Today we started by asking him (Marok) what sugilawas meant, and
769 found out that there were four belonging to his sib (Sombundura). Long
[532] ago, each was an important man, and each is represented by a different mask which is exhibited in the house tamberan at the time of a ceremony. This suggested to him a list of plants and animals which 'belonged' to his sib: pig, gouria pigeon, cassowary, an edible leaf, and the large yam. These are in some way connected with their original ancestors, "they came up

796 [534] sized trunk of a tree hollowed out and open at both ends. It is hung bottom up in the water and struck with a long heavy post wielded by two men.

The outline of another similar pit which has been filled in was seen beside the one now in use. This I was told had leaked badly. The new one has to be filled from any of several bamboo containers stuck under the 'banis' quite often.

[346] [778] In the house tamberan there is the same altar set up in the center with a small amount of shell money, two stubby bamboo flutes, and a wooden trumpet on top. Above it rises a 3' carved wooden figure of a woman. This [538] [532] is the woman for whom the ceremony is held. There is also a secondary [614] figure under the water drum less important than the one on the altar. These two are sugiliwas of the tug sib (Bangus).

Between 30 and 40 men are present when we arrive in the early afternoon. [535] [533] [534] They are singing and half-walking, half-dancing around the water gong counter-clockwise. The gong keeps up a steady boom-boom-boom with few interruptions even when new beaters relieve those who are tired. The men drop out from time to time to smoke or to chat so that no more than half are dancing while we are there. Later on in the evening we are told this is not so; everyone is dancing almost continuously. But the sun was hot and there were still many men to come so it was being taken easily. Men from all of the Honuvem sibs are present and also a few men of Koriasi and [703] [178] [554] Koriasi Tangwishamp. Only four of these were "savi talks". These four, however, were the regalia of a homicide which seems to point to the fact that killing for prestige still goes on in spite of government prohibitions. [726] These men may have won their letter in the prearranged fight with a small hamlet of Koriasi about three years ago. Six of the latter, four of them women and children, were killed then. (We haven't got this story straight yet for we have only recently stumbled on it).

412 [482] The stone adze is the most all-important tool and is usually carried about over the shoulder wherever a man may go. Other tools are a hafted hardwood pestle for crushing sago pith, pig's tooth scrapers and engraver, 323 bird bone needle, bamboo knife, coconut shell dipper, etc. Pottery is made 286 by the coiled method without kick. Net bags are made from bark string. There is 285 no basketry. A rectangular engraved wooden shield or an oval pigskin 714 shield is used in war. A pointed bamboo spear is used for hunting both 411 heads and pigs, the cassowary bone dagger for a hand to hand struggle.

291 Clothing for both sexes is nil. Ornaments consist of feathered plumes, 301 bamboo combs, nose plugs of dogs teeth or bamboo, shell necklaces, and plaited leg and arm bands.

304 Both sexes have their ear lobes pierced but not extended, and the septum pierced. The alae of men are usually pierced in addition. Both sexes are cicitrized with a bamboo knife, the men have two half moons cut just above each nipple, the women a circular design around the navel. [881] (Boys are initiated into manhood by having their tongues and penises slashed.)

836 The only restriction to premarital sexual intercourse is that is is 584 carried on as a sort of intrigue unknown to the parents. The girl takes the initiative in this as she does in the proposal of marriage. (This does not include infant betrothal which takes place in only part of the marriages).

848 In the case of an illegitimate birth, the child is adopted or killed. One 847 of twins or a monstrosity meets the same fate... There is 845 bride price, patrilocal 583 marriage, patrilineal decent, polygyny. 591

611 There is a cult of all adult men, whose esoteria are carved and painted 595 figures, the blowing of sacred flutes and the beating of gongs. There are 794 [532] two progressive stages to this cult. The first step of these is either [534] minima or renama; half the youths being introduced into one, and half into the other, placement being determined partly by patrilineal inheritance and

123 peered in. When they saw the carved figures, they exclaimed excitedly
[532] and pulled them out and examined them. The women sat down near us and
[562] watched avidly. Kar ignored this, and they seemed to think it natural to
[561] look at them although I have been told time and again that I mustn't let the women or children see them or they will die. I asked Kar if one of the figures belonged to Yenama or Minjama, and he said he could not tell me with the children present but instead carried on an euphemistic conversation with me about them. They stayed until after supper talking to me. Kar has not seen Kum yet, and the poison business is not cleared up, but he
[324] had evidently cooled quite a bit. Kar said that Kum had killed two bush
439 pigs and sold them at Malu, getting a lot of pay. Kar had made a blind to
[685] shoot a pig, and the Malu's had broken it and collected sago from his
[692] ground. He says he is going to make court about it but treated the matter rather calmly. The same trouble had come up several years before; there had been a court and he had won. Now as soon as he has finished tying up his yams, he is going to Yambon to arrange for the court.

124 I talked to Marur after supper about his experiences while working
648 with the white men. I said the "drink house" at Kayandi would reach from
464 Rumbima house tamberan to Sombundura--quite a "drink house"? Marur did not question me.

648 I repeated the story about Bob calling Kar "something nothing". Kar
464 said he could have persuaded all the recruits not to go if he had wanted to, but he was sorry for the Tug who did want to go. Each time he tells the story, he makes it so he came out with a little more credit. He seemed to have taken Bob's kidding as quite an insult. It was entirely unconscious on Bob's part. He had asked Kar if he wanted to go to work, and Kar had answered no, he had to look out for the place. Bob had laughed and said

356 with a digging stick. Mar's oldest daughter (age 9) appeared from the
[357] back (Mar's house). She had been left to look after the house.

123 February 8, 1937. Kum came up this morning and talked until noon. Wof came up this afternoon and moaned about everyone else getting things (the diwai etc. that I have been buying) while he got/ nothing. I said that if he had something to sell, I would buy it. He brought up a spear. I had one just like it and so I said no. He was quite hurt, so I give him a plane iron for
578 nothing. According to May, the argument between Wof and Chimwe is finished.
754 She did not give the sungeywwa (sorcery materials) to another man but kept it in her bilum (net bag).

302 This afternoon I went to Mar's and sat down. Mar's wife (Yawapa) was shaving Awambaka's (Mar's sister) hair. (Hair is shaved because it will grow in strong afterward). May was there. He did not look at Mar's
578 sisters. Kum was there but left soon after and started to carry a bit of firewood away with him. Awambaka immediately yelled at him, picked up a broom, and threatened him with it. He dropped the firewood.

123 Mar brought out the perfume that I gave him yesterday, and I told him
593 to let his sister smell it, but he wouldn't do it.

124 Then I went to Wof's house. A group had gathered there on their way to my house--three Haymashwo men and Mas' mother who were coming back to
[532] look at my house. I went home. The men came into my sleep room, looked at the
[798] diwai (carved figures), and we discussed who had made them and usually one of them could tell. In the morning Kumb had said that some of the big men were cross because I had left the figures around, so we put the most sacred ones in a box. I showed them to the three men, and they shook their heads and clucked their tongues and spoke in a whisper. Others had seen the same things lying about and had not reacted half as much.

437 This morning just after dawn Sow went by in a hurry with cuscus fur
628 on his head and carrying two spears. Soon afterward, the gongs at Wenya
532 began the assembly call. This kept up for about fifteen minutes, several
534 gongs going at once and cries of Ha yeng. The house boys did not know what it meant. Hay ran down to ask Wof who said that they were beating a "tumkat" with Tangwishamp to exchange sugilewas (carved wooden figures). A few minutes later a very high-toned gong sounded, and they all jumped at this and ran out of the house saying that it was the "garamut bilong fight". Wof was coming up the hill and reassured them it was only the 'tumkat' for exchange of sugilewas. Later (10:00) we heard distant gongs play the dance rhythm. Mas and Gwiyap said that the meeting of Tangwishamp and Hongwan would take place at Hdowey house tamberan at Wambanj. (This morning they had said, convincing us it was not a fight, that had it been, there would have been many more people running by with spears. Everybody would have gone).

123 Afalawanj came in this morning and sold me a clay bird.
489 February 20, 1937. Tip left three days ago. War and Kar came around in the
114 evening. War had rubbed clay on his forehead which he explained he put
302 there because he was sorry Tip had gone. While they were here someone
123 called out from Wenya. They listened and then went out to where they could
457 hear better. Kamb had come too. The Wenya said that the Tangwishamps were bringing a pig in the next day and wanted to know if Hongwan wanted
[435] part of it. Wof joined in the discussion from his house. They decided they didn't want it because the Tangwishamp prices were too high.

628 The next day in the afternoon the Tangwishamps began drifting in;
[411] about a dozen men and women came and stopped in to look at our house. They
[412] carried no weapons except an occasional bone dagger or adze. They slept

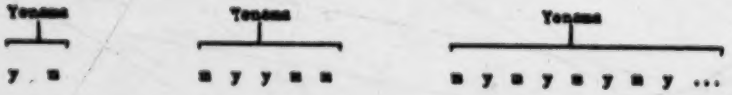
Paints

386 192 In addition to the berries\used to dye twines, paints are made by various clays. Black paint, wêwé (kwild- pidgin) is made by burning wêwé wood. The charcoal is heavy and resinous, and when scraped with a stone is mixed with the sap of sîngwiyewé . Other colors are made by mixing clay with water. They are newé kayé (black clay) ; sîkî newé (red clay); shêwiewé newé (yellow clay) ; nogwae (white clay).

532 386 [413] Sugilewae (carved wooden figures representing naramâi used at the yam cult ceremonies) are painted with a small brush made from the frayed skin of a betel-pepper fastened to a small stick. The black paint is applied all over the figure and dried in the sun. The other clay colors are applied over the black.

Moieties

616 Normally if a man belongs to Yenama, his oldest son will be Minjama, his next oldest Yenama, and so on. If however, there is a preponderance of members in either moiety this is adjusted by shifting the alternation. Examples follow of three men and their sons and their moieties.



The equality of the moieties can also be adjusted by buying a young man with a pig into the moiety whose numbers are low. Normally a man belongs to the moiety into which he is first adopted but if chosen by the elders as a good worker, may change if he gives a pig and can sing for a long time without sitting down or sleeping.

616 The mind survive (carved figures) at the yam cult ceremonies
532 associated with each moiety are for Yenama-- a number of small carved human
796 heads; and for Minjama, a full carved figure of a man and several small human
794 heads. These figures are exhibited by a member of the cult during the time of the ceremonies; at other times they are kept in the owner's dwelling.

796 Women belong as do their husbands. During a Yenama ceremony the
794 Minjama women turn their net bags toward the house tamberan; the Yenama women
616 turn the back of the bag toward it, so that the men at the other side of the
593 sib can tell their affiliations. A women whose husband has seen both
786 ceremonies is permitted to turn her bag either way. Men of Minjama have
[837] intercourse with women of Yenama while their husbands are attending the ceremony, and vice versa.